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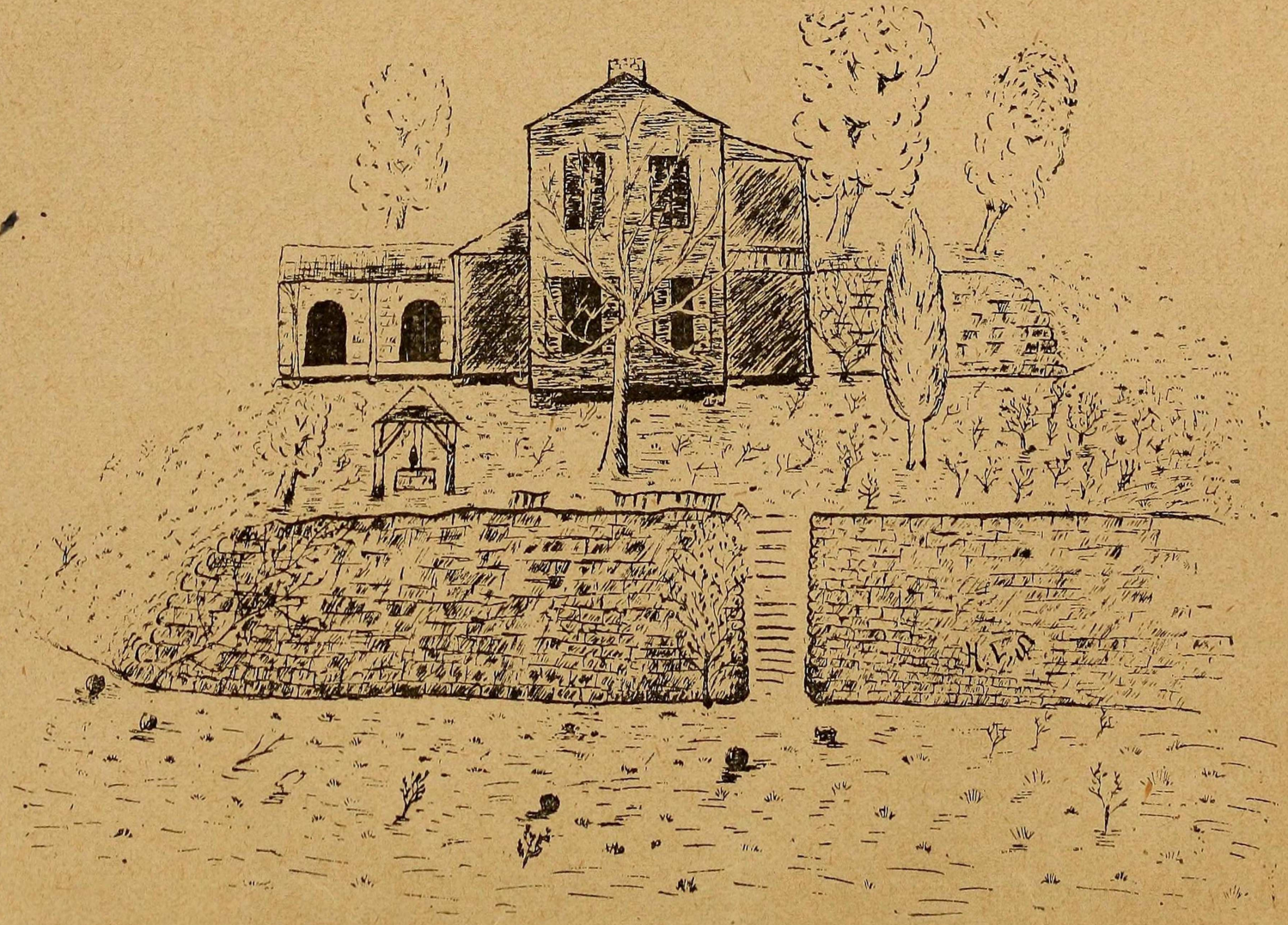
A True Ghost Story



THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

A True Ghost Story

OR

Three Nights in a Haunted House

AND

A BRIEF SKETCH OF SUPERSTITION

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE belief in ghosts or in ultra-rational spiritual manifestations is almost as old as the human race itself and the legends and folk-lore of every people embody, more or less, some weird, strange stories which are handed down from generation to generation, and like the slowly moving water dropping from ledge to ledge along the lonely mountain side, it increases in volume as it descends.

Superstition pervaded the every-day life of all ancient people and among the great men of old who were given to superstitious speculations we find the names of Hippocrates, Æschylus, Virgil, Homer and Horace; and even in more modern times, such men as Chaucer, Roger

Bacon, Baron Napier, Tycho Brahe, Francis Bacon, Kepler, Flamstead and John Dryden were believers in a "night side of nature."

Pliny tells us of a "Haunted House" in ancient Athens; and Daniel DeFoe says: "*Apparitions are the invisible inhabitants of the unknown world affecting human shapes or other forms and showing themselves visibly to us. We have, we believe, as true a notion of the imagination as we ought to have. We believe that we form as many apparitions in our fancies as we behold with our eyes and a great many more. But it does not follow that there are no such things in nature.*"

All students of Shakespeare have weighed the possibility of Hamlet's feigning insanity, but who has studied the ghost, which is generally allowed to stalk away unnoticed?

Scarcely a person has an acquaintance-ship so limited that it does not include a ghost-seer (defined by Coleridge as *one who sees a ghost or apparition*). Cases reported by people whose

veracity cannot be doubted are so numerous and sometimes so baffling, that science has been called in to clear up the mystery of haunted houses, apparitions, presentiments, dreams, and kindred phenomena. Several years ago the International Congress of Psychology decided to collect material for scientific study. The following question is asked those who have passed through some supernatural experience: "*Have you ever, when believing yourself to be completely awake, had a vivid impression of being touched by a living or inanimate object, or hearing a voice, which impression, so far as you could discover, was not due to any external cause?*"

Prof. William James, of Harvard University, has charge of the American Census, which has not yet been published; the English Committee is already out with a report based upon 17,000 answers returned to the question propounded. It is claimed that there are too many

authentic cases to offer "chance" as their explanation.

Each community has its haunted house. Some of these have been investigated and the supposed mysterious phenomena explained; others still continue to freeze the blood of the midnight passer-by.

The writer here presents a true and impartial narrative of his own experience in one of the latter class, which he visited for the purpose of solving its mystery.

H. L. Scaife.

Trinity Hall,
Louisville, Ky.

A TRUE GHOST STORY;

OR

THREE NIGHTS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE.

"Hark! on the wainscot now it knocks!
"If thou art a ghost," cried Orthodox
With that affected solemn air
Which hypocrites delight to wear,
And all those forms of consequence
Which fools adopt instead of sense;
If thou'rt a ghost, who from the tomb
Stalk'st sadly silent through this gloom
In breach of Nature's stated laws,
For good or bad, or for no cause,
Give now nine knocks; like priests of old,
Nine, we a sacred number hold."

—*Churchill.*

* * *

"What may this mean,
That thou dead corse, again, in complete steel,
Re-visits thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making nights hideous; and we fools of nature,
So horridly to shake our disposition,
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this?"

—*Hamlet.*

I.

About two years ago, a respectable *Daily* published an account of some strange and un-

canny happenings in the so-called "Haunted House," of Elbert county, Georgia. Peculiar noises were heard, and strange things occurred, which could not be accounted for. Men of undoubted veracity vouched for the authenticity of the statements, which were given in the article as facts, and the story was copied in many prominent papers.

A relative of mine, a merchant of Elberton, when at my home on a visit last summer, told me of his *own* experience at this "Haunted House." He claimed to have heard the noises himself, and insisted that he was unable to offer any explanation of them.

Recently I had occasion to visit the town of Elberton, and while there I determined to investigate the "Haunted House" and attempt to assign natural causes to the phenomena.

Before repairing to the house which is situated eighteen miles southeast of the town of Elberton, I was told of many experiences which it had afforded the terrified people who had visited it. No intelligent person could believe these stories, although they were told in a seri-

ous manner, and in most cases upon oath. When it was suggested that a fraud was being perpetrated, men who claimed Christian characters, hooted at the idea, and were willing to make affidavits that it could not be a fraud.

II.

A party of twenty men, including myself, started early one morning for the "Haunted House," where we intended to camp and fish for several days. The central figure of this party was an elderly man, who was born and raised in the neighborhood. I was told that he was a prosperous merchant and farmer, a member of the Methodist Church, and a man whose veracity could not be doubted. This gentleman has written articles on the "Haunted House" for various papers. On the way he remarked that he would not sleep in the house for all the money in Elbert county. He said this in all seriousness when we were going, and when we were returning three days later, he made the more emphatic statement: "*There is not money enough in the world to pay me to stay in that house*

after dark; if you'd fasten me in it, I would die or go crazy." Others in the party, after they had seen and heard for themselves, made practically the same statement.

After a half-day's ride, through a rough country, we reached the "Rotten Level Road." This soon led us to the spot where we had decided to camp—on the banks of Broad River, and five miles from its mouth, where it empties into the Savannah. The locality is reputed to be one of the wildest in Georgia. One mile up the river, catamounts, wild-cats, and wild turkeys are said to be present in abundance. Down the river one mile is the "Haunted House." Both up and down the river bank, all nature is painfully still, with the exception of the constant whistling of the quail.

In a few minutes the wagons were unloaded, tents were pitched, and a fire made. Lunch was in order, and the men crowded around "Old Bart," the negro cook, to be served with the necessities of nature—some of them taking it from the cup. Refreshments over, and the men scattered; some went in the river with

their seines, some went hunting, and I alone was anxious to stroll around the "Haunted House." To my disappointment the party had positively declared that they would not camp any closer to it. I started off alone, but was soon joined by two others from the camp.

Through briar patches, cane-brakes and wooded land, we made, and sometimes beat our way. After a rough ramble for about one mile, we came to an old neglected road, running directly south, and which lay at the western foot of a hill. This hill or mountain is covered with heavy forests, and from its summit it takes a gradual slope towards the south until it reaches the river. A quarter of a mile down this deserted lane, and we came to the gate of a dilapidated paling fence, eight feet high, which climbed over the hill-side to our left, until it was lost to sight in the under-growth. Peeping through the fence and taking an enfilading glance to the *left*, we saw the "Haunted House" over which the hill cast its gloomy shadow. The fence enclosed this house, about twenty-five empty cabins, and the ruins of an old fac-

tory. The fence formed half of an ellipse, with the river for its major axis.

The rusty hinges of the old gate shrieked as we entered the mysterious valley which scarcely echoes but to the voices of nature.

The reader will remember that we entered the gate in the northwest corner of the fence. Here we found a path leading to the front of the house, which sits at the extreme northern end of the minor axis of the ellipse already referred to. Follow the path and climb the hill near the fence until you find yourself on the same level as the up-stairs front door of the house, which faces towards the summit of the hill. Parallel with the front of the building, and against it, a rock terrace cut in the side of the hill extends to the right and to the left. On the right of the house two large wine cellars have their opening in this wall. Walk to the corner of the house, look over the terrace, and you see fifteen feet below you the level upon which the house is built and you also see what was once a flower yard. Weeds have crept in and grown up, and a huge neglected rose-

bush clings to the rock terrace over which you stand. Behind you the hill rises to a goodly height.

The house was open and we entered the front door; we searched all its secret recesses, but could find nothing by which the noises I had heard of could be accounted for. We passed through the house down the stairway and out on the ground below. So far we still had not seen or heard anything to impress us with the thought that the house was haunted, except a dismal loneliness which seemed to hover over the place, a fit abode for an unhappy spirit! The only relic which we found in the empty rooms that suggested better days was an old iron safe with its door flung open.

We were now standing on the second terrace (that on which the house was built). About one hundred feet from the south side of the house, and at the edge of the weed-choked flower yard, was another rock wall, parallel with and like the one already described. A road from the gate we entered ran along at the foot of this wall and extended to the fence on

the left. Beside the road was a row of about thirteen deserted factory cabins equi-distant apart. Fifty yards down this row, and at right angles to it, is another row of cabins reaching to the river. In the second angle formed by these two rows, and on the bank of the river, are the ruins of the old factory.

The place was sold at auction before the war, and bought by "Tommy McCarthy," an Irishman, who again put the factory into operation. The factory was supplied with cotton from his adjoining land by his negroes, who likewise operated the factory. Soon Mr. McCarthy became wealthy. After the war the negroes were supplanted by white hands. Twelve years ago the factory was burned, and it is said that Mr. McCarthy had trouble with the insurance companies. Two years later he died.

Soon after the death of Mr. McCarthy, stories gained circulation, saying that unaccountable noises were heard in this house, which had never been heard before his death.

Several families rented the house, but moved away. They claimed that at night, after they

had all gone to bed, they could see a dim light moving and hear crackling noises. When the light faded away, something with a rustling sound would run about the rooms in which they slept. They lit lamps and searched thoroughly, but in vain. No sooner would the light go out than they could hear the noises again. A dog was allowed to sleep in the house, but he would take no notice of the mysterious occurrences.

Now the house is unoccupied; not a human being is on the place, which to-day is a deserted village, where a magnificent estate is going to ruins. I was told that its present owners would give the place indefinitely to any person who would occupy it. The man, who keeps his cattle in the grounds to pasture, claimed that after all that has taken place there, he would not dare to go for his cows after dark.

We next went to the river. As it dashes down the shoals, it brings with it water-power unsurpassed in Georgia. Viewed from the top of a high rock, the beautiful river, dotted with islands, rivals the great St. Lawrence on a smaller scale.

III.

Back to camp again, and supper is ready. The seining party had brought in some excellent fish; the hunters likewise had been successful. After supper, as we sat around the fire smoking, I suggested that a party of us should go down to the "Haunted House." *Old Bart*, the cook, a black, fat, blue-gummed negro, interrupted: "*Yer better not be like de ole nigger.*"

"*How's that, Bart?*" I asked.

"*Wall, de ole nigger and de boys war er runnin from de patrollers. De boys war a gittin erhead, an when de ole man gib out he holler, 'Run reglar, boys, run reglar; catch one, catch all.'*"

His point was so suggestive, that we from that moment recognized Bart as "wag of the camp."

Before we started my suspicions were aroused when several of the party objected to my carrying a gun. They claimed that two horses had already been killed in the pasture, and that I would be sure to take one for "Old Tommy McCarthy," as they called our ghost. I allayed their fears by assuring them that I would not

shoot anything, unless I was sure it was the "ghost," and that if I should kill a horse through mistake, I would pay for the damage.

After each member of the party had taken an oath that he would not use, or permit to be used, any fraud, and that each would conscientiously do all in his power to ferret out the mystery, we started for the "Haunted House."

Through desolate woods and along unfrequented paths, we trod in Indian fashion, single file. The night was dark and the lantern was in front. As a result somebody in the rear was often lost to sight in a briar-patch, and occasionally a comrade just in front would suddenly drop into a gully several feet deep, and crawl out covered with mud.

IV.

Our procession comes to a sudden stop!

"*What's the matter?*" everyone wanted to know at once!

The trouble was with "Old Bart"—he had heard a screech-owl, that lugubrious night-bird,

which figures so largely in negro superstition. "Old Bart" seemed afraid to continue, and it was out of the question for him to go back one hundred yards to the camp by himself. Finally we placed him in the middle of the line and made another start.

All was quiet; nobody had anything to say; probably all were husbanding their vocal energy for the return trip, when doubtless we would have something to talk about. The only sound was the tramping of feet. Emerging from the woods, we crossed a deserted field. Scarcely had we covered its breadth, when Bart broke the silence again: "*When yer come back cross dis yer fiel, Ole Bart gwine ter be loapin wid de gang.*"

We had nearly reached our destination, when some one insisted upon putting out the light, for it was said that the ghost was never heard when light was near. I objected, but better judgment prevailed, and I saw the last flickering of the light disappear.

We were now in the land of spirits, and it was nearly that "witching time of night when

churchyards yawn." We silently filed through the gate and followed the road which led by the "Haunted House." I was told that after Mr. McCarthy's death, the house was occupied by a Mr. "Budd," who died with pneumonia shortly after moving there. His physician lived some miles away. One evening the physician left his patient better and did not return until the following night. In the meantime, Mr. Budd grew suddenly worse and died. The next day the dead man was buried and the house was closed. The physician, not knowing this, came that night, as usual, to see his patient. As he neared the house, he saw people entering the front door. He hitched his horse, and when he reached the front door, he found it locked. He then tried the back door—it too was fastened. Again he saw the people going in at the front door. He re-examined it, but found it fastened as before. Returning to his horse, he left the place as fast as his animal would carry him.

We followed the road, passed the "Haunted House," and walked down the row of deserted

cabins until we stood by an old store. We waited here for spiritual manifestations to begin in the "Big House On The Hill." While we were waiting, I was told how the clerk, who slept in the store by which we were standing, had been forced to give up his position, and how impossible it was to find another who would take his place. At night, as soon as he extinguished his light, he could hear some one knocking at the door, but when he would look, he could find no one, and hear nothing.

One night the moon was shining, while he and a friend were sitting upon the counter talking. Three loud knocks were heard at the door, and both men ran out to look. Nobody could possibly have knocked and gotten away. There was a cellar under the store; it was well searched, but no one could be found. This was repeated several times.

The next night, while the clerk was asleep, he was awakened by a plank falling from the ceiling; then something jumped on his bed, with a thud. The man became so frightened that he covered up his head, and as soon as

morning came, he left the place. The store has never been occupied since.

Another house was pointed out to me just below the store. All its windows were open, and each seemed to pour out darkness into the already dark night. I was told by the old gentleman, the leader of our little expedition, how a fishing party, which was camping near it, had heard noises like chains being dragged around inside the house. He continued: "Each man ran to see what it was, and finding the door locked, we tore off planks and went inside." I was conducted and showed where the planks on the side of the house were actually gone. The old man took an oath that, as he was a gentleman, this story was true, for he was there himself. I asked him if it could not have been *rats?*

"*No, sir, look at the stars through the roof; there was not a thing in the house!*" was his reply.

We turned to go back to the "Big House," where even the worst of all is said to have occurred. As we faced about, the line of cabins in the darkness appeared like huge phantoms couched and ready to spring upon the unwary

creature, who might dare to come there alone. In their windows the mind's eye could see any spectre imaginable, standing there in the darkness, in bold relief.

Almost tipping around the last cabin, we ascended the mound where the terrace of the "Big House" ended, and in a few minutes we stood huddled together in front of the dreaded object.

All was still; not even a breath of air was stirring; only the river as it slipped through the shoals could be heard. The moon had gone and the stars vanished one by one in the fog, as it rose from the river. We waited for fifteen minutes without speaking above a whisper.

V.

Rap! rap!! rap!!! sounded within the house, and something like a stone rolled across the up-stairs piazza and dropped with a thud to the ground. I looked for it the next morning, but could find nothing which would have rolled across the piazza and made the noise.

Immediately after the rapping, a low mourn-

ful sound, like that of a spinning-wheel or the wind blowing in a chimney corner, rose slowly three times in three different positions of the house, and then died away in the opposite gable from the one in which it was first heard. It is said that Mr. Budd, who died in the house, made the same sound when he breathed his last.

All became still again, deathly still! We waited a long time but could hear nothing. Then we moved up closer to the house and after a while sat down on the piazza. The doors of the house were open and I sat in the darkness with my back to the hall stairway gazing towards the graveyard on the hill, where it said one can hear earth dropping on a coffin at midnight.

VI.

Bang! bang!! bang!!! Something coming down three steps of the stairway brought me to my feet. I whirled around and leveled my gun to fire. Some one near me cried, "*Don't shoot.*" I did not know where to shoot, for I

could see nothing. For fifteen minutes we heard nothing more.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intent wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
That I will speak to thee."

—*Hamlet.*

Then I cried into the house, "If you are a spirit, rap three times."

Rap! rap!! rap!!! came slowly, as though some one was knocking with a knuckle in the room overhead.

I next said: "*If you want to communicate, rap five times.*" Five raps answered, each rap coming from a different part of the house and almost at the same time. I continued to ask questions, which were answered by raps as above. With each question I demanded a different number of raps for an affirmative reply. Continued silence after a question was interpreted as a negative answer.

Q. "Are you unhappy, and do you want your soul purged of some burden?" A. "Yes."

Q. "It is said that you have money buried here, is this true?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Is it within one hundred yards from where I am standing?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Is it in the house?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Is it down-stairs?" A. "No."

Q. "Is it up-stairs?" A. "No."

Q. "Is it in the garret?" A. "No."

Q. "Is it under the house?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Is it under the north-east corner of the house?" A. "No."

Q. "Is it under the south-east corner?" A. "No."

Q. "Is it under the south-west corner?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Do you wish any one in this party to have the money?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Is it I?" A. "No."

A bald-headed man in our party would have been at an advantage, when "each particular hair stood on end," endeavoring to lift a scalp, but for the cold perspiration on his brow and the shivers chasing each other down his back.

After being informed that I was not to receive the money, I called over the names of various ones in the party, until I finally received an affirmative reply.

"*Why do you want this man to have the money; have you ever wronged any of his people?*" *A.* "*Yes.*"

The next day news came to the camp that this man's grandfather was to be buried that evening. One man said he knew it to be an actual fact, that Mr. McCarthy had bought cotton from the old man during the war, and that he had never gotten his money.

Q. "Will as much as one thousand dollars be found?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Rap once for each one thousand." A. *One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,* — "Seven Thousand Dollars!"

Q. "Did you burn your factory, as people say you did?" A. "No."

Q. "Do you wish to communicate any more?"

No further response; I had located the last rap in a front room on the first floor. This

room had two doors; having sent several of the party around the house to guard one, I entered the other, which was in a few feet of me. I made a light and searched the room thoroughly, as well as other parts of the house, but I found no one concealed and nothing by which the noise could have been made.

After this experience we returned to camp; on the way I thought of Washington Irving's "Sleepy Hollow." I could see his "Hessian Trooper;" then I could see poor "Ichabod Crane" dashing down the road. I could see his attitude as he reached the bridge his short stirrups throwing his knees under his chin as he leans over to see the "Headless Horseman," who has him hemmed in. I could hear "Old Gunpowder" snort and refuse to budge. Then I thought of Ichabod's mysterious disappearance and I wondered if he was really carried off by the Hessian Trooper. Had I suggested to my companions his supposed fate, no doubt that, after our experience, some of them would have said, "*I will believe it now.*"

As I lay in camp, restless and tired, I

turned my eyes and looked down the river. I saw a star nearly over the "Haunted House."

An idea occurred to me and I woke everybody up by exclaiming, "*Look at that star, or whatever it is; isn't it moving?*" All eyes were turned and half the party were positive that the star was slowly moving around in a small circle over the "Haunted House." Some of the men claimed that the phenomenon was caused by looking at the star through the trees when the wind was blowing. This idea was exploded, when some one claimed that it was a cloud drifting over it; but this was impossible for we could see no cloud. "Strange, strange, strange," thought I, for the star was really not moving at all, and then I fell asleep.

VII.

I was awakened at five o'clock the next morning by rattling of chains: some of the men rushed out of the tent, startled and apparently frightened. Some one had taken the wagon chains and prepared the plot during the night. As soon as we discovered that this was

only a practical joke, we turned the laugh on one of the party, who had started off through the under-growth on "all-fours," not tarrying long enough to stand erect before taking a start. Before breakfast, I walked alone down by the "Haunted House" for a hunt. On the way I saw an old negro plowing in a field some distance off. I directed my steps toward him, to be advised as to where I could find some squirrels. Before I left him, I asked his opinion of the "Haunted House." With an honest expression, but in a nervous voice, he replied, "*Wall, sar, I'se been thar many times, but I'se neber seed dem dar hants yit. Sar, I don't believe it!*"

The day was spent mostly in fishing. We crossed the river to seine the opposite bank. While returning, the boat behind me was capsized, but fortunately no further damage was done than dumping its load into the river.

Often throughout the day the conversation drifted back to the "Seven Thousand Dollars," which many claimed they honestly believed would be found. Twenty-five dollars was of-

fered the man, who had been singled out by the "spirit," for his chance of obtaining the hidden money, before even a search had been made. The offer was quickly refused. The night before, the "spirit" had told the man to come for his money, but the man pretended that he was afraid to hunt for it by himself. Others said they did not care to go with him, for the spirit meant for him to go alone.

VIII.

The second night we set out for the "Haunted House" again. The noises, as on the previous night, were heard, accompanied by more terrible ones. This time we did not have to wait so long before we heard them. They were preluded by something hitting the side of the house with great force, directly in front of me. Then all the windows in the house began to shake.

I renewed my experiments in spiritualism—numbers of questions were asked and answered. Strange to say no reply would be given except to my questions, which were always answered by

raps as before. My interrogations began with a question concerning the "money." I was informed that the man for whom it was intended would not get it because he had put off searching for it. It repeated that there was Seven Thousand Dollars (in gold) awaiting a finder. Our *incognito* companion rapped quickly to my question, inquiring if it would be unhapy until the money was found.

Finally I asked a question, which I thought would certainly not be answered.

Q. "How many Uncles have I?" A. "Two."

Q. "Are they both on my mother's side?" No response.

Q. "Are they both on my father's side?" No response.

Q. "How many brothers has my mother?" A. "One."

Q. "How many brothers has my father?" A. "One."

These answers were correct. I was standing within an arm's length of a tree which was struck with considerable force by something

which I could not see. Several men were a short distance behind me. I drew my revolver and remarked that the next stone from that direction would be answered by a bullet. Each one of the men in the group swore that he did not throw it.

Q. "Do you want us to come nearer to the house?" A. "No."

Q. "If you do not want us to come any nearer, rap twice." Two raps was the reply.

Several of the men did not heed the protest of our invisible conversationalist and stepped briskly toward the piazza. No sooner had they placed a foot on the steps, before the whole piazza shook as though it would fall and crush them. They hastily beat a retreat to where we were standing.

As we returned to camp most of our companions declared that "money could not induce them to go back to the house." As we walked along one of the men became deathly ill, apparently from fright.

The third night finally came. A majority of the party had deserted and returned home.

During the day one of the weather prophets had given his opinion that it would rain by night, so we had moved down the river to the "Haunted House" to camp in a cabin. We made our headquarters in the one farthest from the "Haunted House."

IX.

After supper, we were all on the veranda of the little cottage, when I cried, "*Look, look, what is that white object moving by the fence?*" All eyes were focussed from the point of my finger. Some one raised a lantern, and it was several minutes before all were convinced that they could see something with shining eyes creeping towards the "Haunted House."

> "Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold,
> There is no speculation in those eyes,
> Which thou dost glare with."
>
> —*Ibid.*

Like the moving star, already referred to, this object was a creature of the imagination. I had simply pointed to a white spot on the fence; the eyes of my companions, peering

through the darkness, had followed it to the "Haunted House," some of them claiming that it was a fox. Allowing myself to go too far up the row of cabins, I heard a noise like stones falling in the house behind me. I felt assured that I saw one of the party throw the stones, but when accused he swore that he did not.

After a while, about ten o'clock, we all went up the hill to the "Haunted House"—a most terrible noise had already begun there. Surely it must have something important to communicate, judging from its apparently unhappy mood.

Not caring to have anything else to do with "it," I remarked that there might be another medium in the party, and that I would find out.

Q. "If there is any one in this party you wish to communicate with, rap twice." It replied immediately in the affirmative.

I called over the names of all present, but after each name came only a prolonged silence. "*That is strange,*" said I, "*it wants to communicate with somebody here, but yet I have called the*

names of all of you." Then it occurred to me that I had not called my own name.

Q. "Do you wish to communicate with me?" A. "Yes."

It then repeated by raps for the third time that Seven Thousand Dollars was buried on the place.

A man told me that his brother dreamed that "old Tommy McCarthy" came to him and told him where *seven thousand dollars* was hid; that he must come for it on a dark night at midnight and look for it in a certain place. The man continued, "*this was dreamed eight years ago, and three nights in succession.*" Being an ignorant man, he was prevented from searching by the old superstition, "*if a man seeks buried money at midnight and does not find it, his feet will become riveted to the ground where he stands.*"

The next question revealed the fact that I was to have the money, but that I must go away and return for it.

Q. "Must I return this summer?" A. "Yes."

Q. "Rap the month." A. One, two, three, four, five, six,—"June!"

Q. "Rap the day of the month." A. One, two, three—"must return the third of June." It was now the first day of that month. Then came the most unearthly noises, scrapings and moving of something, and rattling, like bushels of money being moved from one part of the house and dropped in another. I fired a shot over the house; the noises immediately ceased, but as soon as I left, they grew even louder than before; after I had reached our cottage I could hear them distinctly.

X.

We were all lying on our pallets of straw, the light still burning, when some one discovered that the "Third of June" would be Sunday. I stated positively that I would not look for the treasure on Sunday. Possibly there was some mistake, and I thought that I could make further inquiries without going back to the "Haunted House." Some objection was

made to my bringing the spirit where we had to sleep.

"*Knock three times if you will communicate,*" I said. It did as I commanded, once on the floor under me, once in the next room, and once overhead. I was told that "Monday" would do as well.

Some one suggested prayer, after which I went to sleep.

On our way home, "old Bart" said to me, "*Sur, if it had not been for you, we'd er all been distroyed*" He was not aware of the fact that it was discovered that he was one of the ghosts.

I visited the "Haunted House" with the determination of satisfying myself that the "ghost" was of flesh and blood or that the noises had some accountable origin.

As a result I found that this ghost story, like most others, has a real, living man at the bottom of it. The whole affair from beginning to end was a miserable fraud. The old man, who accompanied the party, and had written so much for the papers, concerning the "Haunted House," was ring-leader of the "ghosts."

I have a written statement signed by him, under oath, that there was no fraud attached to the stories which he has written, but when he was exposed, he made a confession which was doubtless more truthful.

XI.

Like most deserted houses in which some one has died, "old Tommy McCarthy's" house, by virtue of its desolation, became "haunted."

Eight years ago this old man, with a fishing party, was at the "McCarthy House." Rummaging about the house, various articles were found hidden in its crevices. In an old stove-pipe three hundred dollars (in Confederate notes) were found. Examining the bills, the finder rolled them up and hid them away again, saying that he would not dare remove the money hid by the hands of his old friend, "Tommy McCarthy." The negroes of the party were finally wrought up to such a state of excitement, that they ran for the mules, and only taking time to cut the traces, started for home leaving the old man and his confre-

res behind. This is said to be the real beginning of the checkered history of the "Haunted House." As soon as this incident pointed out to the world this house as "haunted," more ingenious stories began to radiate from the doomed locality.

The house was seldom visited, except by fishing parties. When it was known that a party would be on the river, arrangements were made to have men secreted within the house. Being properly equipped with means by which they could make their noises, they were quite successful in the rôle of ghosts. Men who were acquainted with the plot always accompanied the investigating parties, else the ghosts were not heard. They were there to prevent a shot being fired in a fatal direction, as well as to misguide and throw the real searchers off the track of the "ghosts." The reader will now understand how the "ghost" got out of the room in which I had him located. In searching for ghosts, follow the principle, *Falsum in uno, falsum in omnibus.* I have given my own experience literally and I have told the

experiences of others as they were told to me. I dare say that some of my readers had already suspicioned the "ghost" by carrying a search light into this data and watching closely the movements of a few spirits who had not yet "*shuffled off this mortal coil.*"

Monday night came; so far I had not yet divulged my secret. A bogus telegram from a friend who "would be over to visit the 'Haunted House,'" served my purpose. The old man and his confreres put out for their post. While they spent the mid-night watches concealed in the lonely "McCarthy House," eighteen miles from civilization, amid rats and flying squirrels, ready for my return to the buried treasure, I had planned to be snugly sleeping on the vestibule returning to my home in Carolina, after my three days' sojourn on the banks of one of the most lovely streams in which it has ever been my pleasure to cast a hook and await the pleasures of the epicures of the "piscatorial tribe."

What could have been the motive in attempting to confine a fac-simile spirit of "old

Tommy McCarthy" in his quondam home for so many years after the bona-fide spirit had flown to "*that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns,*" I must leave for the reader to assign.

GLENDOWER: *I can call up spirits from the vasty deep!*

HOTSPUR: *Why, so can I; or so can any man: But will they come when thou dost call for them?*

FINIS

A BRIEF SKETCH OF SUPERSTITION.

Few things have influenced and controlled the destiny of man so largely as superstition. It has often become a part of his religion, shaped his habits and governed his life. Superstition generally decreases in proportion to mental development. It dominates the life of the savage to whom nature presents, as he thinks, one continual display of supernatural effects.

The wild natives of Australia tremble with awe at the mournful cry of the night-hawk "carrying away the soul of a child;" the Hindoo believes that "two invincible deities ride upon the radiant summit of clouds as upon a well-trained steed;" thousands of new-born babes of heathen parentage have been put to death in Madagascar, because they chanced to be "born in an unlucky hour;" the Eskimo assumes that the Aurora Borealis is caused by departed spirits playing ball with the head of a walrus; American Indian My-

thology tells in detail of the passage of the dead warrior to the "Happy Hunting Ground," and in one grand unwritten poem it accounts for all that the eye can see and the ear can hear.

The almost universal belief of aboriginal tribes in immortality and their burnt sacrifices and offerings at their orgies to the Great Unseen, must at one time have had some deep significance. They bear a striking analogy to the old *Mosaic Rites*, and may be these savage superstitions degenerated from the *True Religion* which, after long ages, was allowed to lapse into a belief in animism and in the powers of the wizard and the medicine man. The North American Indian's idea of the "Great Spirit" and the "Happy Hunting Ground," *must* have originally been a faith in God and a hope of heaven:

> "Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
> Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
> His soul proud science never taught to stray
> Far as the solar walk or milky way;
> Yet simple nature to his hope has given,
> Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heaven."
>
> —*Pope.*

As far back as the search-light of history has penetrated, it has found the ancient centres of civilization hid in the gloom of superstition and the fountain head of true history starts afar off in the dim of the distant past, where it trickles out of a quagmire through which no historian has ever waded.

If the literature of the Hindoos and Persians be excepted, then the earliest authentic records we have of superstition are found in Scriptural narrative. We are there told that the magicians of Egypt attempted to imitate certain miracles of Moses:

"Then Pharaoh called the wise men and sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt did likewise with their enchantments." — Ex. vii., 11.

The Levitical law declared:

"A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death."—Lev. xx., 27.

Later on we read that Nebuchadnezzer commanded the Chaldeans to be cut in pieces because they requested a delay before attempting

to interpret his dream, which the king saw was but an excuse "to prepare lies and corrupt words to speak before him." When Nebuchadnezzer called on Daniel, the prophet made answer:

"The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers say unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known unto the king Nebuchadnezzer what shall be in the latter days."—Dan. ii., 27, 28.

The temples of antiquity, in whose shades and recesses the priests were supposed to do wonders, were prostituted to superstition, the Hebrew race alone keeping its religion pure. Egypt was a land of superstition, and there was scarcely a variety of bird or beast that was not held sacred by the inhabitants; Babylon followed after strange gods, while Grecian Mythology reached an æsthetic excellence; Cicero, himself an augur, writes of the "wise men, augurs, and diviners," and the oracle at Delphi decided the fate, not only of individuals, but of the nation.

During the Middle Ages, the darkest period of the world's history, when Christianity went into a lethargy and the light of learning waned, superstition gained complete control over the human mind. During this "long dark winter," the *ordeal*, the most brutal and absurd superstition the world has ever known, came into high repute, and the innocent victims, accused of crime and forced to walk hot ploughshares or dip their arms in boiling water as a test of guilt, alone knew that the ordeal was but superstition in the hands of power.

Next came the popular superstition that the world would end with the year, 1000 A. D., when legal documents always began with the expression, "*As the world is now drawing to its close.*"

When an *animated* revival of learning started in the 16th century, the pall of superstition and magic began to lift itself from the semi-civilized sphere. Science stepped forward and declared that it would investigate the superstitions and wonderful claims of the magicians then rife, and as soon as the existing conditions

were pronounced false, the clouds were pushed farther back and the light of truth began to shine once more on a benighted world. Truth, which had so long been fettered to earth by the bans of ignorance, vice and superstition again rose triumphant, and the "long black night" gave way to a still brighter day.

Modern superstition, surrounded as it is by every influence to dispel it, can offer no excuse for existing at all. It has centered, more or less, around hypnotism and beliefs concerning coincidences, dreams, presentiments, apparitions, table rappings, and, above all, spiritualism and clairvoyance. Minor superstitions, such as those concerning *Friday* and the number *thirteen*, are too absurd to deserve even passing notice.

About the middle of the 18th century, Mesmer, a physician and an astrologer, attempted to account for the supposed force which he believed the stars exerted upon man by assuming that it was electricity; afterwards, discarding this theory, he attributed it to magnetism, and finally he concluded that by strok-

ing a diseased body with a magnet he might effect a cure. Mesmer's experiments resulted in the discovery of that wonderful power which by certain "passes" or strokes of the hand, or by other means of procedure, makes the subject fall into a deep slumber and his mind subservient to the will of the operator. (It is claimed that diseases were cured in this way in the earliest days by priests in the recesses of temples in Egypt, Babylonia, and in other eastern countries.)

Mesmer added fraud to his discovery, which being detected, caused a re-action in the excited mind of the public, and he died denounced as an impostor. Mesmerism, stripped of its superstitions and absurdities is now known as hypnotism or animal magnetism. In certain European countries, hypnotism was once practiced so generally for improper purposes that prohibitory laws were enacted. Very recently in our own country a hypnotized person, who committed murder, was acquitted by the courts, while the hypnotist was convicted of murder in the first degree. By the uneducated mind hypnot-

ism is looked upon as a supernatural performance, notwithstanding the fact that it has been physiologically explained, and is now a reputable science.

In table-rappings, clairvoyance and spiritualism, fraud has been so often detected that it is impossible for the unbiased investigator to say whether there be even anything in them at all. The courts have declared that clairvoyants may be prosecuted for obtaining money under false pretenses, while Post-office authorities apprehend them for using the mails for fraudulent purposes.

Lord Kelvin claims, "One-half of hypnotism and clairvoyance is fraud and the other half is bad observation." While there may be, and doubtless is, fraud practiced in connection with hypnotism, it does not deserve to be pronounced totally false by the same authority which declares, "Science is bound by the everlasting law of honor to face fearlessly every problem which can fairly be presented to it." Hypnotism has stood its test to the satisfaction

of science, while clairvoyance has never been presented as a problem.

The rapping feature of recent spiritualistic growth had its origin, less than one hundred years ago, in a haunted house in the State of New York. The rappings were similar to those in "A True Ghost Story." When the most trying questions were answered the excitement became intense, committees failed to detect fraud, and the news of the claimed discovery spread. As a result, there are papers and magazines published all over the world in the interest of Spiritualism, and now there are said to be more than one million members of the Spiritualist Church in America alone. To-day it is wrecking the minds of hundreds, and if it is all fraud, it is time for a crusade to be made against it.

Some remarkable coincidences in connection with dreams, apparitions and presentiments are on record. Whether they be the product of a disordered nervous system or a vivid imagination, whether they be a high order of mental phenomena, whether they be a display of some

abstract principle, like distance, space, and eternity, not intended for the human mind to comprehend, they must first be cleared of the superstitions surrounding them, and possibly some psychological truth may be discovered, which for long years has been misunderstood and abused.

Telepathy, the alleged influence which one mind may exert upon another through infinite distance, is being investigated and experimented with. Indeed, the English Committee of the International Society for Psychical Research, after examining 17,000 reported cases of apparitions, hallucinations and presentiments, etc., concludes:

"*Between death and apparitions of the dying person a connection exists which is not due to chance alone. This we hold as a proved fact.*"

In the blackest soil the most beautiful plants take root and sometimes the seeds sown lie covered and hid until the germ is ready to expand, when slowly it forces its way through and continues to grow long after the hand which dropped it has withered. So it has been

with the seed planted in superstition, and but for the superstition of ancient and medieval times the foundations might never have been laid that resulted in Modern Science. The ground work of Astronomy is traced to Babylonian astrologers who observed the heavenly bodies searching for signs to foretell future events on earth, and as late as the year 1609 A. D., Kepler made his grand discoveries—growths sprung up in the midst of his mystical astrological speculations; the efforts of the visionary alchemist to change substances into gold and the search for an elixir to restore the aged to immortal youth, gave birth to the science of Chemistry. These and other sciences, which had similar origins, sprang up from tiny, seemingly worthless seed. But nurtured tenderly through the years they have reached that growth which knows no killing frost, and in the years to come, freed from the influences of superstition, the tree of human knowledge, into which truth alone now is grafted, will grow and grow till the end of time.

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